COMLEX-USA FOR RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTORS
COMLEX-USA is the only evidence-based assessment tool to measure competencies for osteopathic medicine in osteopathic medical residents and students. The COMLEX-USA examination series is uniquely designed to assess competencies required to provide safe and effective osteopathic medical care to patients.

EVIDENCE FOR VALIDITY
A rigorous scientific process is used to produce examinations of the highest quality with evidence-based validity and reliability. Following a comprehensive review of COMLEX-USA and USMLE, the FSMB (Federation of State Medical Boards) endorsed both examinations as valid and reliable for their intended respective purposes, and concluded that support for the validity of COMLEX-USA is exemplary.

PATHWAY TO LICENSURE
COMLEX-USA, the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States, is the examination series used by all medical licensing authorities to make licensing decisions for osteopathic physicians. COMLEX-USA is accepted in all 50 United States and recognized by a number of international jurisdictions. The primary and intended use of COMLEX-USA supports the NBOME mission of protecting the public.

SECONDARY USES
COMLEX-USA scores are also used for student promotion and graduation from a college of osteopathic medicine, by residency program directors to screen and rank residency applicants, and in resident promotion and assessment. Although not specifically designed for selecting candidates for residency, COMLEX-USA and USMLE (United States Medical Licensing Examinations) scores are used increasingly to screen and evaluate DO residency applicants. To promote responsible use of COMLEX-USA scores, the NBOME recommends residency and fellowship program directors develop a strong understanding of what the COMLEX-USA examinations measure, how standards are set, what the scores mean, and how COMLEX-USA scores correlate to performance in residency.

EQUALITY FOR COMLEX-USA AND USMLE IN ACGME PROGRAMS
In 2018, the American Medical Association adopted policy to promote equal acceptance of the USMLE and COMLEX-USA for all US residency programs. The AMA announced plans to work with stakeholder organizations to educate residency program directors on how to interpret and use COMLEX-USA scores and promote higher utilization of COMLEX-USA for residency program matches in light of the SAS. An individual who has completed an ACGME-accredited residency or meets criteria for the exceptionally qualified applicant provision, is eligible for appointment to a fellowship program, regardless of which licensing examination they have pursued.

77 PERCENT OF ACGME-ACCREDITED RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTORS USE COMLEX-USA AS PART OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR DO APPLICANTS.
SCORING AND REPORTING
COMLEX-USA examinations use a criterion-referenced standard setting methodology. The minimum passing score for COMLEX-USA Level 1 or Level 2-CE is 400, with a mean score between 500 and 550. For Level 3, a score of 350 is passing with a mean score between 500 and 550. Passing Levels 1 and 2 means a candidate has demonstrated competence to enter into supervised clinical practice settings, enter graduate medical education, and prepare for lifelong learning. Passing Level 3 means the candidate has demonstrated competence in foundational competency domains required for generalist physicians to deliver safe and effective osteopathic medical care of patients as required for entry into the unsupervised practice of osteopathic medicine and to continue lifelong learning and practice-based learning and improvement.

PERCENTILE RANK SCORE CONVERSION
The NBOME website includes a score conversion tool capable of converting an applicant’s 3-digit COMLEX-USA score to a percentile rank. This number may be used to compare an applicant’s scores against those of his or her peers within a testing cycle.

ELIGIBILITY AND ATTESTATION BY PROGRAM DIRECTORS
New eligibility criteria for COMLEX-USA examinations were implemented beginning with the 2018-2019 test cycles, whereby attestation by a dean or residency program director is required to confirm that the candidate is in good academic and professional standing and is approved to take the examination. Good standing denotes that the osteopathic medical student or resident meets the academic and professional requirements of the college of osteopathic medicine or residency program and is eligible to continue as a student or resident in the program. For the COMLEX-USA Level 3 examination, it is recommended but not required that the examination be taken after a minimum of six months in residency. The attestation process for COMLEX-USA Level 3 helps to fulfill the NBOME mission to protect the public, adds value and entrustability to state licensing boards and patients, and further aligns COMLEX-USA to residency program directors and faculty with score reports.

ENHANCING COMLEX-USA
In 2018-2019, COMLEX-USA will complete a transition to a contemporary, two decision-point, competency-based examination blueprint and evidence-based design informed by extensive research on osteopathic physician practice, expert consensus and stakeholder surveys.¹ The enhanced COMLEX-USA blueprint² assesses measurable outcomes of seven Fundamental Osteopathic Medical Competency Domains³ and focuses on high-frequency, high-impact health issues and clinical presentations that affect patients across the lifespan.

BACKED BY EXTENSIVE RESEARCH
As part of its research program, NBOME conducts studies designed to help residency program directors understand COMLEX-USA examinations and the validity support for using these scores in holistic residency application decisions. A recent study demonstrates a strong association between COMLEX-USA Level 1 and USMLE Step 1 performance of osteopathic medical students who took both examinations.³
SCORE CONCORDANCE STUDIES


• Lee AS, Chang L, Feng E, Helf S. Reliability and validity of conversion formulas between Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States Level 1 and United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 1. Journal of Graduate Medical Education. 2014;6(2):280-283.

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PREDICTIVE VALIDITY PERFORMANCE IN IN-TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS


• Langenau EE, Pugliano G, Roberts W. Relationship between high-stakes clinical skills exam scores and program director global competency ratings of first-year pediatric residents. Medical Education. 2011;16:7362. DOI: 10.3402/mer.v16i0.7362.


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